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SOME ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF IMMIGRATION BEFORE 1870. I

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the attitude of the press and of public men in the United States was with few exceptions strongly favorable to immigration. Even though foreigners were not liked personally, it was commonly believed that agriculture, industry, and the general development of the country were promoted by their arrival. The virulent but futile opposition to them in the years of the Know-Nothing movement grew out of the rivalry of political parties; and in the main its leaders drew their arguments from social and religious considerations. A few among these leaders, however, urged every objection to immigration that can be heard from its opponents at the present day.

Prominent among such objections was the abnormal contribution of foreigners to the list of paupers and criminals; and it cannot be denied that this argument was abundantly supported by official statistics. As early as 1823 the New York secretary of state reported to the legislature that of 6,986 permanent and 15,215 occasional paupers in the state no less than 5,883 were foreign born.¹ As immigration increased so also did the proportion of alien paupers; and ten years later in the New York City poor-house there were 988 natives and 752 foreigners. Of the latter 460 were Irish, 140 English, 47 Germans, 35 Scotch, 11 French, and 59 from other foreign countries.² Some of the interior counties suffered relatively even more than the city on account of the arrivals by way of Canada. In Clinton and Niagara counties at that time the alien paupers outnumbered the natives four to one.³ The burden of other states, considered in proportion to their immigrant population, was equally great. The Baltimore Trustees of the Poor reported in January, 1832, that of 1,160 admitted to the almshouse during the previous year 487 were foreigners, of whom 121 had not been in this country a week, and

¹ *Niles' Register*, XXVI, 265.

² *Ibid.*, XLVI, 244.

³ *Ibid.*, XLIX, 69.

281 less than six months.¹ In the Boston almshouse there were at that time 258 foreigners, more than half of them being Irish, and 206 natives.² The following year the South Boston almshouse received 340 natives and 613 immigrants;³ while the Boston Free Dispensary treated 854 Americans, and 1,234 Irish, 72 English, 10 Germans, 9 Danes, and 6 Swedes, or altogether 1,331 foreigners.⁴ In that year the Philadelphia almshouse admitted 1,676 natives and 1,895 immigrants of whom 1,303 were Irish;⁵ while the city jail on the preceding first of January confined 316 natives, 48 Irish, 20 English, 10 Scotch, and 10 Germans.⁶ At the same time the Charity Hospital of New Orleans received as temporary and permanent patients 1,677 natives and 4,287 foreigners, of whom 2,354 were Irish, 503 Germans, 399 English, 262 French, etc.⁷ An agent appointed by the city government of Boston reported that in 1835 the almshouses of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore contained 4,786 natives and 5,303 immigrants.⁸ A committee of Congress estimated that at this period more than half of the paupers in the United States were foreigners costing the taxpayers about two and a quarter million dollars a year.⁹ It was further stated that 603 out of 800 convicts at Sing Sing were aliens. The mayor of New York said that on September 8, 1837, there were 2,045 aliens among the 3,332 inmates of the city hospital, almshouse, bridewell, and penitentiary,¹⁰ and that in one day more than 1,300 Irish applied to the almshouse for relief.¹¹ The Board of Guardians in Philadelphia found that of the 2,781 admitted to the poorhouse in 1836, the Americans numbered 1,515, Irish 884, English 140, Germans 108, Scotch 35, British Americans 14, French 19, Welsh 9, etc.¹²

In the following decade, when immigration had greatly increased, the number of criminals and paupers among the immigrants grew in proportion. In New York in 1844 nearly two-thirds of the

¹ *Niles' Register*, XLIII, 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

² *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XLIII, 257.

³ *Ibid.*, XLVII, 133.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XLIX, 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸ *Ibid.*, XLIX, 69.

⁹ 25th Cong., 2d sess., House Report, 1040, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 34.

inmates of the two state prisons were aliens; in the Maryland penitentiary the aliens numbered half, but in Massachusetts they were less than a fourth of the state prisoners.¹ Of the state paupers in Massachusetts, however, the foreign born at that time formed considerably more than a half.² Three years later only 804 of the 2,434 inmates of the Boston almshouse were natives, and even of these 314 were the children of immigrants.³ In the twelve years beginning with 1842 the Pennsylvania hospital admitted 7,291 natives, 7,938 Irish, and 2,605 from other countries.⁴ By 1850 the census enumerators found that 68,538 foreigners and 66,434 natives were being maintained from the public funds of the different states;⁵ in other words one in thirty-three of the foreign born and one in 317 of the natives were paupers.⁶ They also found that more than half of all those convicted of crime in the United States were persons of foreign birth.⁷ The *American Almanac* for 1855 gives the statistics of conviction for penitentiary offenses for the following states:

	Natives	Foreigners
Rhode Island	132	42
New York	286	259
New Jersey	43	76
Pennsylvania	123	64
Maryland	100	42
Ohio	129	100
Indiana	97	44

For minor offenses against the law the foreign born appear in a yet more unfavorable light. Thus there were taken to the New York City prisons in 1853, 6,102 natives and 22,229 foreigners;⁸ and in 1855, 8,926 natives and 27,336 foreigners.⁹ In the first

¹ Straten-Ponthoz, *Forschungen über d. Lage der Auswanderer in d. Vereinigten Staaten*, 65.

² *Niles' Register*, LXVII, 384.

³ *Ibid.*, LXXIII, 356.

⁴ 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 10.

⁵ Busey, *Immigration: Its Evils and Consequences*, 107.

⁶ 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 6.

⁷ DeBow, *Compendium of 7th Census*.

⁸ Busey, 115.

⁹ 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 5.

week of August of that year the arrests for drunkenness were 49 natives, 211 Irish, 16 Scotch, 12 English, 7 Germans, 3 Welsh, and 3 French. In the following week for the same offense the arrests were 28 natives, 218 Irish, and 68 other foreigners.¹ In the same year, the mayor of Philadelphia reported, the police arrested 10,657 natives and 28,000 foreigners.² The Boston police reports for November, 1855, show 219 natives and 969 foreigners arrested. In the town of Newark during the year 1855 the arrests were 171 natives and 623 foreigners, of whom 533 were Irish.³ According to the census of 1860 on June 1 there were enumerated 50,383 native and 32,408 foreign-born paupers; while those maintained from public funds during the year were: natives 158,756, and foreigners 160,787. Of the criminals convicted during the year 32,766 were natives and 65,736 were immigrants.⁴

Before these statistics are used as an indictment of the American policy then favoring immigration, several noteworthy facts should be considered. In the first place,

A great majority of Irish immigrants and a very large part of all others were of the poorer classes among whom life is generally shorter. In this country a large proportion lived in the densely crowded and unhealthy parts of the cities in small and unventilated rooms, tenements, or dwellings on narrow, often filthy and undrained streets, lanes, and alleys. Often whole families occupied single rooms, where all the occupations of life were carried on, and the sick and the dying had no other place. The married women and children, the men when at home, were compelled to dwell in and breathe this unhealthful atmosphere. Their strength was not so well maintained by digestible and nutritious food. The men were engaged in the hardest labors and often in unhealthful conditions and circumstances, in wet, in mud, exposed to excessive colds and storms and heat. Whatever of dangers and disease follow these hardships and severe labors they fell more upon the foreigners than the Americans and caused more sickness and impaired more life among them.⁵

The usual conditions of life among the foreign-born inhabitants not only raised the rate of mortality among them,⁶ but in fully equal degree promoted pauperism and crime. The expense to

¹ 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 5.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ Busey, 120, 124.

⁴ Census of 1860.

⁵ Census of 1860, Misc. Statistics, 279.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. lx.

the country of maintaining the alien poor should be regarded as a part of the cost of getting performed the "hardest labors, in unhealthful conditions and circumstances, in wet, in mud, exposed to excessive colds and storms and heat," attended by danger and conducive to disease. That the cost of such labor did not outweigh its value was the belief of those who then determined American policy. In the last forty years science has enabled us to meet in comparative safety unhealthful conditions and circumstances that to a former generation were irremediable. But previously certain kinds of work had to be performed, in spite of such conditions, in the course of industrial growth; native Americans were unwilling to undertake it, and, to use the expression of Alexander Hamilton, we "traded upon a foreign stock of labor." Much of the pauperism and some of the crime among the immigrants were a necessary incident of the sort of work they were used by Americans to do. The burden thus arising, however, was not equably distributed among the communities that benefited from their labor. By far the greater part of their poverty was relieved in the cities where their poor congregated, whereas their labor was widely employed over the whole face of the country. The almshouse commissioners of New York in 1837 said that a fruitful source of pauperism was the departure of immigrant men from the city in search of work, for the authorities were obliged to provide for their families in their absence. Seven-tenths of the applications for outdoor relief, they added, were from Irish women whose husbands were out of the city.¹

In the second place, it should be remembered that a large proportion of the destitute immigrants were but a temporary burden upon public charity. The American consul at Hesse Cassel reported in 1836 that thousands of people landed penniless in the United States, not because they were shiftless seekers after public bounty, but because they were seduced by the representations of shipping agents and others into selling even their clothes to purchase a ticket to the land of opportunity.² Twenty years later the New York secretary of state asserted that "most of the immi-

¹ 25th Cong., 2d sess., House Report, 1040, 103.

² 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 19.

grants exhausted their means in reaching this country.”¹ Even those who arrived with some means were often thrown into temporary destitution by illness, by loss of employment, or by the fraud and extortion of those that lived by preying on them before they learned to care for themselves under their new surroundings. Many who received aid did not remain permanently dependent on society. Some help they required in order to tide over a period of distress; but once started in a self-supporting life they became useful contributors to the public welfare. Very significant of this is the fact that during the census year 1860 more immigrants than natives received public aid, whereas on the day of the enumeration the foreign were to the native paupers only as three to five.

One other fact is worthy of consideration in this connection. If a foreigner were sick or in need he was almost invariably dependent on public charity. The native was apt to be cared for by his friends and kindred among whom he lived. The friends and kindred of the immigrant, if he had any, were not likely to be in a position to contribute greatly to the relief of his distresses. Furthermore, it was more the custom in foreign countries than in the United States to appeal to public institutions rather than to rely on private beneficence however affectionately bestowed. This was peculiarly true of Ireland, and the Irish brought their habits of dependence with them. In New York City the natives were only a third of the poorhouse inmates, “and this,” said the almshouse commissioners, “is partly because Americans go there as a last resort while the Irish go if their toe aches.”² Consequently, nearly the whole burden of poverty among foreigners was thrown upon the public, and appeared in official statistics. Among natives, on the other hand, the greater part of the want and suffering that arose was privately relieved. It follows that official statistics, however full and accurate, are no true indication of the relative strength of the drain upon society made by immigrants and of that made by indigent natives.

When all is said, however, the fact remains that the absolute cost to this country of crime and pauperism was enormously increased by immigration.

¹ Busey, III.

² 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 105.

Some part of this increase was due to the selfish and nefarious efforts of certain foreign countries to rid themselves of undesirable inhabitants by shipping them to the United States. How many were thus transported for their country's good it is impossible to discover, for the obvious reason that the authorities engaged in the practice attempted to conceal it. By 1836, however, the evil had attained such dimensions that the United States consuls abroad were instructed to look into it and communicate the results of their inquiries to the Secretary of the Treasury. From the Irish ports, Dublin, Cork, and Londonderry, it was found that no convicts or paupers were deported by the public authorities. The consul at Dublin wrote that it was common for the great land owners of Ireland to try to get rid of undesirable tenants by offering to pay the cost of transporting them to America; but the number thus sent, he added, was very small. From Scotch ports it appeared that none were sent. The consul at Liverpool reported that it had been the practice of the English parishes for some years to deport their superabundant inhabitants when they would consent to go. Those sent out were permitted to choose their destination, and they invariably chose the United States. Convicts, the inmates of workhouses, and those too old and decrepit to support themselves were never sent; and such as did consent to go were presented with five or ten pounds on landing in America. The number thus transported, he added, was very small in comparison with the total emigration. Thus, in 1830, of the 16,000 emigrants embarking at Liverpool for the United States about 600 were sent from the parishes, and in 1835 the poor people whose passage was thus paid numbered only 150 in an emigration of 25,000. The report from Hull was of the same general tenor as that from Liverpool. The consul at London wrote that the total number transported from his consular district to the United States under the pauper deportation law in the year ending July 1, 1836, was 191. It was the small German states who seem to have been the chief offenders in this field. The consul at Munich denied that the Bavarian government had ever made a deportation of paupers to the United States, and a similar denial came from Hamburg. The consul at Hesse Cassel, on the other

hand, said that the authorities at Hamburg did sometimes transport criminals sentenced to long terms of confinement, and that many of them were sent to New York. He added, however, that the presence of numerous German paupers in the United States was owing, not to forcible deportation, but to the immigration propaganda and low passage rates which tempted and enabled many very poor people to go to America.¹ The most important contribution to our knowledge of the subject came from the consul at Leipzig, and his letter merits reproduction in full, partly because of the light it throws on the details of the practice, and partly because of the eminence of the man who wrote it.

CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LEIPZIG, March 8, 1837

On your circular letter of July 7, 1836, I have made inquiries with respect to the transport of paupers from this country to the United States; but state affairs being in this country not so openly conducted as might be desired, I have not been successful until of late, when by confidential communications I have learned things which will require energetic measures on the part of the United States to be counteracted.

Not only paupers but even criminals are transported from the interior of this country to the seaports, in order to be embarked there for the United States.

A Mr. de Stein, formerly an officer in the service of the Duke of Saxe Gotha, has lately made propositions to the smaller states of Saxony for transporting their criminals to the port of Bremen and embarking them there for the United States at \$75 a head, which offer has been accepted by several of them. The first transport of criminals, who for the greater part have been condemned to hard labor for life (among them two notorious robbers, Pfeifer and Albrecht) will leave Gotha on the fifteenth of this month; and it is intended to empty by and by all the work houses and gaols of that country in this manner. There is little doubt that several other states will imitate that nefarious practice. In order to stop it, I have sent a letter to the *General Gazette* of Augsburg, wherein I have attempted to demonstrate that this behavior was contrary to all laws of nations, and that it was a shameful behavior toward a country that offers the best market for German manufactures.

It has of late also become a general practice in the towns and boroughs of Germany to get rid of their paupers and vicious members, by collecting the means for effectuating their passage to the United States among the inhabitants, and supporting them from the public funds.

¹ 25th Cong., 2d sess., House Report, 1040, 19 ff.

This practice is not only highly injurious to the United States, as it burdens them with a host of paupers and criminals, but it deters also the better and wealthier class of inhabitants of this country from emigrating to the United States. The property the latter class has of late exported to the United States annually has been calculated at a value of from two to four million dollars, and it is to be expected that this very profitable emigration would increase from year to year, in case the honest people of this country would not have to fear to be associated in the new country with the worst class of their countrymen. This indeed seems to be the secret motive of the above mentioned measure. It is intended to stigmatize thereby that country which the wealthier class of farmers and mechanics commence to consider as the land of promise.

F. LIST

HON. LEVI WOODBURY,
SECT. OF THE TREASURY.¹

Whether or not the letter of this distinguished economist to the *Augsburg Gazette* broke up the lucrative business of M. de Stein, it is impossible to discover. Certain it is, however, that in spite of the overwhelming evidence that this intolerable abuse existed, nothing was done about it by our national government. The only protection Americans had against such imposition was the requirement in some states that captains of vessels should give bond (which might be commuted by a small cash payment) to the authorities of the cities where they landed that the immigrants they brought should not become a public charge. Even this meager requirement was loosely enforced² and criminals and paupers in unknown but considerable numbers continued to come with the aid of their state or local authorities. The mayor of Baltimore notified President Van Buren in 1837 that a ship had just arrived from Bremen with fourteen convicts on board whose irons were not removed till the vessel reached port; he vainly asked for authority to prevent them from landing, and they were set at large in the streets of the city.³ In 1839 the United States consul at Hesse Cassel reported that Hamburg was sending from time to time convicts sentenced for long terms, saying they were usually shipped from Bremen, whence their passage to this country cost only

¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

² Büchele, *Land und Volk der Vereinigten Staaten*, 481.

³ 25th Cong., 2d sess., House Report, 1040, 51.

sixteen dollars.¹ In 1843 twenty-eight criminals were brought by dragoons from Wurtemberg to Bremerhaven; there they were provided with a small sum of money, put on board the ship *Republic*, and sent to Baltimore, where in due time they landed unopposed.² In 1844 the grand ducal government of Baden sent to New York a consignment of paupers who were transferred direct from the ship to the poorhouse.³ In France the would-be regicides Meunier and Quenisset had their death sentence commuted to transportation. They were sent to New Orleans where the latter was naturalized and voted in the presidential election of 1844.⁴ The United States consul in Switzerland, Mr. Goundie, in 1846, wrote from Basel to the mayor of New York: "The town authorities and cantonal governments have been in the habit of sending their paupers to the United States, merely procuring them passage to New York and not providing them with a cent to proceed inland." "Since the publication, however," he continued, "of the New York act holding the owners, captains, and agents of vessels responsible for two years that immigrants brought by them should not be a public charge, the paupers about to be shipped were provided with sufficient money to carry them out of New York."⁵ In the same year the United States consul at Hamburg detected ten convicts that were on the point of being shipped from Mecklenburg-Schwerin to this country. The authorities had not only given them money to pay their passage, but had even furnished them with certificates of good character. This band the consul was able by some means to turn back.⁶ In 1854, a single vessel brought among its passengers to New York a hundred and fifty paupers and fifteen convicts still in chains. Another ship arrived in the same port a few months later with a whole cargo of paupers from Switzerland who said that their expenses were paid by the municipality whence they came.⁷ About the

¹ *Niles' Register*, LVII, 179.

² 134th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 130.

³ Kapp, *Immigration to the Port of New York*, 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵ *Niles' Register*, LXX, 133.

⁶ *Ibid.*, LXXI, 192.

⁷ Busey, 69; 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 138.

same time another vessel brought thirty or forty convicts sent over by the Sardinian government.¹ Fernando Wood, the mayor of New York, wrote to President Pierce, January 2, 1855: "There can be no doubt that for many years New York has been made a sort of penal colony for felons and paupers by the local authorities of several of the continental nations."² Senator Cooper, speaking a little later in the Senate, asserted that the law-makers refused to adopt adequate measures of relief for fear of losing the foreigners' votes.³ In the same year the general agent for German emigration wrote from Leipzig: "It cannot be denied that the European governments and principalities have been in the practice of freeing themselves of their paupers and even of their more or less guilty criminals by sending them to America without making provision for their wants."⁴ The local authorities of Belgium and Holland were at the time active in this work, and in 1855 more paupers arrived in New York from Antwerp than from any other port. The municipal government of Niederwyl in Aargau, however, contributed to us 320 paupers on a single ship. The immigration agents in Germany cautioned the deformed and crippled against taking passage for New York, and advised them to sail for Baltimore or New Orleans, where the law did not prohibit them from landing.⁵

The German Emigration Society of New York exerted its whole influence against this obnoxious practice,⁶ and with the aid of the State Board of Emigration Commissioners was able on several occasions to prevent ships from discharging objectionable passengers. The following protest against their activity exhibits a ludicrous conception of right and propriety. It is a preamble and resolution adopted by the authorities of Wurtemberg and sent to the Society in New York:

WHEREAS, it has repeatedly occurred that German emigrants to America and among them natives of Wurtemberg who desired to return home on account of sickness and incapacity to labor, have been forwarded to this country by the German Emigration Society of New York, and

WHEREAS, it is desirable that those who have once emigrated to America, and especially those who have been transported thither at the expense of the

¹ *Ibid.*, 139. ² *Ibid.*, 136. ³ *Ibid.*, 140. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 143. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 145, 146.

⁶ Jörg, *Briefe aus den Vereinigten Staaten*, 50.

state or the communes, and are unable, whether or not it be through any fault of their own, to earn their subsistence, should not return here, to be a burden to the state or the commune (which in that case will have defrayed the expense of their journey in vain), and,

WHEREAS, the American authorities are scarcely warranted to send back those who having once been admitted to the country cannot earn their subsistence in America, and

WHEREAS, it is much less the business of the German Emigration Society of New York to promote the return of such individuals, therefore,

Resolved that the necessary steps are to be taken to prevent their transportation back to this country.¹

Although these abuses were disclosed by congressional investigation in 1838 and again in 1856, no action was taken to check them. Indeed, the committee that reported to the House of Representatives in 1856 presented a long but inconclusive discussion of the question whether Congress had the power to regulate immigration at all, and quoted a number of conflicting decisions that had been handed down on the subject by the Courts.² In 1866 Senator Sumner offered a joint resolution, which was passed and approved, protesting against the pardon by foreign governments of convicts for infamous offenses on condition that they should emigrate to the United States; and speaking in support of the resolution he adduced several recent instances to show that the practice was maintained at that date.³ A bill making it a penal offense to import convicts into our territory was introduced in 1867 at the instigation of Friedrich Kapp, chairman of the New York Board of Emigration Commissioners; but it was brought in too late in the session, and though it passed the House, the Senate did not act upon it.⁴ Indeed, the transportation of paupers was still kept up in the seventies by the English vestries, the Swiss cantons, the Grand Duchy of Hesse, and other countries;⁵ and there is strong evidence that it had not ceased in the following decade.⁶ It was not till 1882 that Congress, in the first general immigration act, prohibited the landing of all foreign criminals,

¹ 34th Cong., 1st sess., House Report, 359, 21.

² *Ibid.*, 23 ff.

³ *Congressional Record*, XIII, 5108.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5112.

⁵ 43d Cong., 1st sess., Exec. Doc., 253, 2 ff.

⁶ *Congressional Record*, XIII, 5110; 46th Cong., 2d sess., House Report No. 1.

except those convicted of political offenses, all lunatics, idiots, and persons likely to become a public charge, and empowered the Secretary of the Treasury to deport such as were detected. Experience soon showed that even a federal law on this subject was difficult to enforce so long as foreign authorities connived at its evasion. But along with the growing strictness of our immigration regulations and the tightening of their administration, there developed in Europe a fuller sense of the insulting character of the practice as being in the words of Friedrich List "contrary to all laws of nations and . . . a shameful behavior toward a country that offers the best market for European manufactures."

Frequent efforts were made by nineteenth-century writers to show that the burden of poverty and crime imposed on this country by immigration was overbalanced by the capital that foreigners brought with them, and overwhelmingly outweighed by the money value of the immigrants themselves. It may be said categorically that such efforts were utterly futile. It was impossible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the money thus imported; and no attempt was made (nor could it in the nature of the case have succeeded) to discover how much of it was used unproductively by the immigrants after landing. Without doubt, the foreigners, especially the Germans, brought with them a considerable amount of property.¹ Secretary Upshur in a report to the President in 1843 says the Bavarian government knew that about 23,000 of its subjects emigrating to the United States from 1835 to 1839 took with them \$2,800,000; and he adds that twice as much was probably taken without the knowledge of the government in order to avoid the export duties.² From 1844 to 1851 the property brought by Prussians and Bavarians is said to have averaged \$180 per capita, while that brought by Hanoverians amounted to only \$60.³ Taken altogether, it was estimated that the capital brought to the United States by immigrants before 1860 reached \$400,000.⁴ Edward Young, chief of the Bureau of Statistics, in

¹ Brauns, *Amerika, und die moderne Völkerwanderung*, 284.

² *Niles' Register*, LXV, 263.

³ Census of 1860, "Population," p. xxiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*

a special report on immigration in 1871, put the amount possessed by alien passengers at \$68 apiece, nearly all of which was consumed in taking them to their destination, and supporting them till they found work.¹ Two years later an investigation undertaken for Congress led to the conclusion that the money and property imported amounted to as much as \$150 for each immigrant.² The wide difference of these estimates shows that they were all untrustworthy. Whatever its amount may have been, a great deal of the property brought consisted of tools, agricultural implements, household effects of sentimental value, and other goods that were of little or no use under American conditions. Among the Handbooks, Guides, and innumerable other publications for the use of emigrants there was hardly one that did not warn them against taking such impedimenta to America, and yet there is abundant evidence that the warning was in vain.³ Such immigrants as converted their property into cash so frequently found the possession of it a temptation to extravagance, and were exposed to such fraud and extortion, that it was commonly thought to be better to begin life in America with no other possession than good health and good habits. That there were English, Scotch, and Germans who had enough capital to establish themselves in agriculture or in trade cannot be denied, but as compared with the vast number of impecunious immigrants they were exceedingly few. On the whole, Young's statement, that the means possessed by immigrants seldom sufficed to do more than take them to their destination and support them till they found employment, is borne out by the best evidence now obtainable. Furthermore, it should be remembered that a great part of the money in the hands of new arrivals was American money remitted to them by friends in this country to enable them to emigrate. The amount thus sent out of the United States is even more difficult to ascertain than the amount brought in, but scattered notices indicate that it was large. According to the *Cork Examiner* no less than £1,439,000 was sent from America to Ireland in 1853 and £1,720,000 in 1854.

¹ 42d Cong., 1st sess., House Report, Exec. Doc. No. 1, p. x.

² 43d Cong., 1st sess., Senate Exec. Doc. No. 23, 51.

³ *Niles' Register*, XV, 2, et al. plur.

The English Commissioners of Emigration reported that during the five years 1848-52 they knew of remittances amounting to \$19,384,480. Since this sum presumably takes account only of money sent back to England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and since immigration to the United States from other countries had exceeded the immigration from the British Isles, the remittances sent to other European countries by American immigrants may reasonably be estimated at an equally large figure.¹ During the succeeding eight years \$36,807,253 were sent by American settlers to friends in England through the large mercantile houses and banks,² and how much more was sent through other channels is unknown. While it is undoubtedly true that this money was in the main acquired by productive labor, so that America received full value for it from those that earned it, yet it is none the less true that in being used to maintain dependents abroad or to transport immigrants, it was being diverted from other forms of productive investment in this country. It appears then that the United States paid the way of a very large proportion of the aliens who came hither, and furnished the money they possessed on their arrival. It also appears that the property brought by immigrants made a very small addition to the productive capital of this country. In fairness, however, it should be added that a great part of this small addition was most usefully employed. For the immigrants with property usually went to the interior where capital was sorely needed; and there they settled on the land or entered the occupations that were most necessary for the growth and further development of the country.³

Still more futile were the efforts of contemporaries to fix the money value of the immigrants themselves, and yet these efforts were persistently made. In the early part of the century the publicists and statesmen of Europe usually concurred in the belief of J. B. Say that the departure of a hundred thousand emigrants was equivalent to the loss by their native land of an army of 100,000 men, and that the gain to the land of their future abode

¹ Busey, 62.

² Census of 1860, "Population," p. xxiv.

³ Straten-Ponthoz, 70.

was correspondingly great. As the decades passed, it became obvious that the loss by emigration depended on the character, quality, age, and occupation of the emigrants; but it continued to be thought that the needs of America demanded all sorts and conditions of men, and that, aside from the criminal, diseased, and impotent, immigration was to her an unmixed blessing. It was thought that "with our undeveloped resources and our unoccupied territory any addition to our labor force of whatever character was a distinct gain."¹ It appeared to be a simple thing to fix the value of the average immigrant. For was he not a laborer, and was he not worth to America just what it would cost America to produce another like him? In short the value of a laborer was equal to the cost of rearing him to manhood, and this was put by Friedrich Kapp² and other writers at a thousand or twelve hundred dollars.³

The fallacy in this reasoning was obvious to Edward Young, who in his report on immigration in 1871 asserted that the value of an immigrant was not fixed by the cost of producing him but rather by the amount that he contributed to the wealth of the country. This amount Young estimated in a curious way. The average laborer received in wages nearly four hundred dollars a year; with this sum he purchased articles to satisfy his needs, and the profits to the American producers of these articles reached \$160. But this average laborer supported a wife and two children who paid no profits, so that dividing \$160 by four we find each immigrant to be worth \$40 a year to America, and this capitalized at 5 per cent gave his value as \$800!⁴ Men of more scientific training than Young agreed with him that the money value of a laborer was equal to the amount of wealth he added to the community, but they tried a different way of estimating this amount. Thus Dr. William Farr, head of the statistical department of the registrar general's office in England, held that the value of a man at any time was equal to his whole earnings during the remaining

¹ Smith, *Emigration and Immigration*, 97.

² *Immigration to the Port of New York*, 146.

³ 43d Cong., 1st sess., Senate Exec. Doc., 23, 51.

⁴ 42d Cong., 1st sess., House Report, Exec. Doc. No. 1, p. ix.

years of his life diminished by the cost of his maintenance during those years. On this ground, in the thirty-ninth report of the registrar general, he fixed the value in England of the average emigrant at £175. On arrival in America his value would be much greater, for his earnings would be more and the cost of living about the same. Dr. Karl Becker, head of the German statistical office, followed the same method as late as 1887¹ in estimating the value of a German emigrant. The late Richmond Mayo Smith, whose book on *Emigration and Immigration* remains to the present day the most scientific American treatise in this field, pronounces this method "scientifically correct and . . . the only one to be employed if we are determined to express in figures the value of this increase of our labor force."² Its only defect in Smith's mind lay in the uncertainty that the immigrant would find an opportunity to do useful work and thereby to earn wages;³ and this uncertainty he believed did not arise before the latter part of the nineteenth century. If the estimates reached by this method were correct, then Thorold Rogers was right in saying that the importation to the United States "of adult and trained immigrants . . . would be in an economical analysis underestimated at £100,000,000 a year."⁴

But the method was not correct, and the defect noticed by Smith was trivial as compared with others. It was based on the hypothesis that the laborer's wages exactly equaled the amount of wealth he produced, and it requires little consideration to show that this is absurd. It may well be indeed that "in an ideally perfect society organized on the competitive plan, . . . every unit of labor could get what it produces, no more and no less";⁵ but to take for granted such a society in nineteenth century America must make the reader stare and gasp. In some industries, without doubt, the wages paid to an individual laborer marked the employer's estimate of that individual's productivity, but the sum paid to his whole group of workmen did not indicate the total

¹ Schmoller, *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung*, XI, 765.

² Smith, *op. cit.*, 109.

³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴ *Economic Interpretation of History*, 407.

⁵ Clark, *Essentials of Economic Theory*, 144, 145.

productivity of the group. It is a truism in economics that the total utility of a stock of goods is not found by multiplying the marginal utility of a unit in the stock by the number of units. Even if it were true, therefore—and it seldom was true—that the wages of a single immigrant were just equal to his productiveness as an individual, his wages multiplied by the number of immigrants would give no basis for estimating the economic value of immigration to this country.

Furthermore, many of the most useful Europeans who came to America received no wages in the ordinary sense. The Norwegian farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota produced by tillage an amount of wealth that might perhaps be roughly estimated. But who can estimate the increase in the value of lands in those states due to their mere presence there? Who can determine the economic results of the location and growth of commercial centers, transportation facilities, public utilities of all kinds, in the creation of which their residence in the region was a determining factor? In 1870 there were 40,046 natives of Norway living in Wisconsin. To say that these people were worth to the United States just \$40,000,046, no more and no less, is enough to show the utter absurdity of attempts to fix a money value for immigrants.

It is as fortunate as it is obvious that a study of the general effects of immigration does not depend on ascertaining the value of individuals. Did they promote the economic growth of the country? If so, in what fields were they active: in agriculture, mining, commerce, manufacturing? Did they contribute labor that could not otherwise have been procured? Were they useful in organizing, guiding, controlling the factors of production? Were they teachers of new methods, the discoverers of new processes, scientifically applying knowledge that Americans did not possess? Such questions may not always be answered in full, but facts may be adduced that will throw sufficient light upon them to determine whether or not contemporary leaders of American policy were right in regarding immigration as a boon to the country.

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